

High School Shout Out!



News and Updates for High School Counselors from The California Student Aid Commission

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA

APRIL 2011



A MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIANA FUENTES-MICHEL

We are all aware of the current economic crisis facing California and the efforts expended by the Governor and the Legislature to attempt to offset an unprecedented \$28 billion deficit. The reality is difficult choices are, and will continue to be, necessary to secure solvency for our state.

As a former Cal Grant recipient and first in my family to attend college, I recognize the benefits this program has afforded low income students over the past 55 years. However, it has now become necessary for the Commission to implement modifications to award criteria as required by new legislation.

While any reductions to educational choices are difficult, this legislation and the model for change was a product of careful consideration by both the Administration and the Legislature. We believe the end result provides savings while still preserving future access and opportunity for the majority of California's low income students.

On March 24, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown signed Senate Bill 70 (the education trailer bill) into law. Senate Bill 70 achieves reductions in state spending by changing Cal Grant eligibility requirements for both students and institutions. These changes will affect new and renewal Cal Grant recipients beginning with the 2011-12 academic year. Details on the specifics of this legislation is available on our website at the following link:

http://www.csac.ca.gov/NEWS/04_0111statebudgetreductionsresultinchangestocalgrantprogram.pdf

Commission staff is in the process of creating communication mechanisms, special alerts and resource tools to assist all of our constituents with an explanation of the detail and criteria for current and future award status. Please continue to monitor our website for guidance and direction.

Diana Fuentes-Michel
(1975-1979 Cal Grant B Recipient)

CAL GRANT AWARDS UPDATE

As of March 28, 2011, the Commission has offered nearly 100,000 Cal Grant awards to High School Entitlement eligible students. This award total exceeds prior years and we expect to offer more entitlement awards in the upcoming weeks.

Paper GPA Verification Forms

Commission staff has keyed approximately 66,000 paper GPA verification forms for the 2011-12 award year. These GPA's include students who have submitted test scores such as the GED, SAT and ACT in lieu of GPA's.

Students who have incomplete data or errors on the GPA form will be sent a 10-day letter to correct any information on the form. State regulations specify that students who respond within the 10 days will still retain their March 2 priority filing date.

Late Entitlement GPA Appeal Process

State regulations also allow Entitlement Cal Grant applicants to appeal the late submission of their Cal Grant GPA if circumstances beyond their control delayed or prevented the applicant from submitting a verified GPA by the March 2, 2011 filing deadline. To receive appeal consideration, the applicant must submit an explanation of the circumstances that were beyond their control. The applicant must also have submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the March 2 deadline.

Entitlement applicants may submit a late March 2 GPA on the "Late Cal Grant GPA Verification Form." As of April 4, 2011 this form will be available online at <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=1177>. A 2011-12 Entitlement Cal Grant candidate must graduate high school or achieve the equivalent on July 1, 2009 or later and, if submitting a GPA, the GPA must be calculated from high school grades. In order for an appeal to be accepted, it must be **received** at the Commission by **May 16, 2011**.



April Advisory

NOW IS THE TIME TO BE ASKING QUESTIONS!

April is the month when college bound students need to choose the school they plan to attend. Most colleges require that forms or deposits are sent by the school's intent to register deadline. For most colleges in California, the intent to register deadline is May 1. By early April, the student should have received college acceptance letters and financial aid award offers. These notices should be carefully evaluated by the student and parents. Students should also speak to their high school counselor or college advisor for advice.

Make sure that students know that they must formally accept private scholarships and grants. They do not have to make an immediate decision to accept student loans since they are typically available throughout the year. However, campus work-study jobs are limited in number. If offered work-study, the student should carefully consider the advantages of having an on-campus job as opposed to an off-campus job.

If a student applied for a Cal Grant by March 2 and has not received an e-mail or letter regarding their status by April 15, he or she should e-mail studentsupport@csac.ca.gov, call toll free at 888.224.7268 or log-in to WebGrants 4Students at: www.webgrants4students.org.

SETTING UP THE 2011-12 CALENDAR

April is also the month when high school counselors should begin setting up fall financial aid night events. Depending on when your school establishes its calendar for the next year, counselors should pick the best night to maximize attendance.

Check the sports calendar (For example, avoid NFL Monday Night Football, Fridays and Friday High School football!) and confer with other department's so as not to compete with other events.

Instructional aides on hosting a financial aid night can be found at the website of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) at www.nasfaa.org. Click on the Students, Parents and Counselors tab than look for the "Resources for Counselor's" tab on the left side of the page.

Or, use the Counselor's Guide created by CSAC. This Power Point presentation will walk you through financial aid options and includes basic notes for your presentation. It can also be customized for your specific use.

Go to: <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=40> to view the current presentation of Fund Your Future – Planning and Paying for College.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION CONFIRMATION

The Commission requires that all Entitlement Cal Grant participants confirm their high school graduation. Since awarded students must wait until they actually graduate to confirm their status, access is opened up in WebGrants in June for graduating awardees to confirm their graduation. WebGrants also has an on-line report that high schools use to confirm graduation status for their students who have received a Cal Grant award offer. High school participation is not required, only made available for those who wish to assist their students.

In state law, newly awarded Entitlement Cal Grant participants must complete all of their high school graduation requirements before receiving any payments. Those students who do not complete all graduation requirements by December 31 will have their award offer withdrawn. Graduation requirements not only include passing the CAHSEE test for public school students but also completing senior projects and internships that schools and districts may require to issue a full diploma. Those without a diploma can apply again by March 2, 2012, to receive Entitlement Cal Grant award consideration.

WEBGRANTS4STUDENTS ACCESS

Using WebGrants4Students, Cal Grant applicants and recipients can monitor their status and check for missing requirements.

When establishing an account, students must use the same information that was included on their FAFSA application. One of the most common reasons for a student not being able to open an account is using a name spelling or configuration different than was used on the FAFSA. For example, a student would not be able to open an account if they entered their name as "Edna Mae Johnson" if the FAFSA shows "Ednamae Johnson". Even including that space between name components would disallow the user from opening an account. If the FAFSA has a spelling error, the student should open their account with the misspelled name. Any errors can be fixed once the account has been established.

Simple errors of a letter or two can be fixed via e-mail. Students should send the correct name spelling, the incorrect name spelling, their birth date and their Cal Grant ID number to studentsupport@csac.ca.gov. Significant changes to name spelling and names changed due to legal action must be submitted in paper format.

The student should complete the Grant Record Change Form for Students (G-10) available on-line at: <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=80>.

In addition to the G-10, the student must include a copy of their driver's license or passport, or other legal documents showing their legal name. Students should also make the corrections to their FAFSA and with any colleges they are considering attending.



CollegeWeek Live's Cash for College Day

California Cash for College partnered with CollegeWeek Live, the largest free online event platform, with staff and representatives from the California Student Aid Commission and the California Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (CASFAA), to design specific assistance for high school seniors to navigate the financial aid process after the March 2 Cal Grant deadline.

More than 1,500 students participated in the first-ever online event held on March 9. As an incentive to join the online event, Cash for College offered two \$500 scholarships as incentives to participate in the two-part event.

The school randomly selected to receive the \$500 school-based scholarship is Taft High School. The scholarship will be provided to one or more of the students who participated in the live event on March 9. We want to thank Claude Bradford, high school counselor, for registering a classroom to view the workshops. Jose Lepe, a high school senior at Vaughn High school, logged in and used live chat assistance, and was randomly selected to receive the second \$500 scholarship.

If you missed the live event, don't worry. We look forward to creating more online events this fall and in spring 2012!

Our presentations are still available at:
<http://www.calgrants.org/cashforcollegecw>



GRANT OPERATIONS: Our School Support Staff and Services

Assistance to high school staff at the Commission is rendered by the School Support Services unit in the Grant Operations Branch.

This unit responds to school inquiries on the use of WebGrants, the submission of Cal Grant GPA's and other questions from counselors to assist their efforts servicing their students.

The following staff members can be reached toll free at 888.294.0153 or by e-mail at studentsupport@csac.ca.gov. Their direct phone lines also appear in the column below. *(Please do not share the School Support line with non-school personnel!)*

Ofelia Barton has been working with students and the Cal Grant program for over 20 years.

Justin Watkins has presented at the CASFAA/CSAC high school counselor workshops and participated in numerous CSAC GPA Submission webinars.

Tabitha Frost and **Janice Wright** assist schools understanding the correct method required to calculate Cal Grant GPAs and how to upload GPAs files to the Commission.

CONTACTING THE COMMISSION:

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